

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 CAIRO 02161 01 OF 02 191633Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----060137 191637Z /53

O 191613Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4475
INFO AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 02161

EXDIS

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, IS, EG, US
SUBJECT: SADAT'S RECALL OF EGYPTIAN DELEGATION TO
- JERUSALEM PEACE TALKS

1. HAVE BEEN TRYING ALL MORNING CONTACT FONMIN KAMEL
OR MINSTATE BOUTROS GHALI ON SECURE PHONE, BUT THEY BOTH
SEEM TO BE WITH SADAT AND VP MUBARAK PRESENTING DETAILED
REPORT ON JERUSALEM TALKS.

2. PUZZLING QUESTION CONTINUES TO BE WHY SADAT TOOK THIS
PRECIPITOUS ACTION AT A TIME WHEN SUBSTANTIVE TALKS WERE
JUST BEGINNING. VP MUBARAK TOLD ME LAST NIGHT (CAIRO
2017) THAT SADAT'S DECISION WAS IN REACTION TO THE BEGIN
TOAST AND TO DAYAN'S PRESS CONFERENCE STATEMENTS. SADAT
IS SAID TO HAVE VIEWED BOTH OF THESE AS INDICATIVE OF
UNWILLINGNESS ON THE PART OF BEGIN TO CHANGE HIS OLD
VIEWS. IF THE BEGIN/DAYAN STATEMENTS ARE RESPONSIBLE,
THEY SIMPLY TRIGGERED WHAT WAS ALREADY A GROWING
UNEASINESS ON THE PART OF SADAT THAT THE JERUSALEM TALKS
WOULD COME TO NAUGHT. HE IN EFFECT SAID THIS IN HIS
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SECRET

PAGE 02 CAIRO 02161 01 OF 02 191633Z

OCTOBER INTERVIEW GIVEN LAST WEDNESDAY. HIS MOOD FOR
THE PAST WEEK OR SO, AND ESPECIALLY AFTER HIS TALK WITH
WEIZMAN OF LAST WEDNESDAY, HAS BEEN ONE OF DISCOURAGEMENT
(CAIRO 1663).

3. BUT THERE WERE DOUBTLESS ALSO TACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS
INVOLVED IN SADAT'S DECISION. IN THIS CONNECTION, IT IS

INTERESTING THAT SADAT WAITED ALMOST TWENTY-FOUR HOURS AFTER BEGIN'S TOAST TO REACT. HE HAD KEPT FONMIN KAMEL ON A SHORT LEASH AND HAD DESIGNATED VP MUBARAK AND PRIMIN MAMDUH SALEM TO HEAD A TEAM TO EVALUATE REPORTS FROM JERUSALEM AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO HIM. YESTERDAY CABINET ALSO HAD LENGTHY DEBATE ON GAMASY'S REPORT OF HIS TALKS WITH WEIZMAN. WHEN VP MUBARAK TELEPHONED FIRST TIME LAST EVENING TO SAY THAT KAMEL BEING CALLED BACK ON CONSULTATIONS, HE IMPLIED DECISION TO DO SO HAD JUST BEEN MADE. SADAT WOULD SURELY HAVE HAD A REPORT ON BEGIN/DAYAN STATEMENTS WELL BEFORE THAT TIME. ALL THIS SUGGESTS THAT HE AND HIS ADVISERS PONDERED THE MATTER AT SOME LENGTH BEFORE SADAT TOOK HIS DECISION.

4. NOT HAVING HAD A CHANCE TO SPEAK DIRECTLY TO SADAT, I CAN ONLY SPECULATE ON REASONS FOR HIS DECISION. I THINK THESE BOIL DOWN TO THREE: (A) HE WISHES TO SHOW HOME CONSTITUENCY AND OTHER ARABS THAT HE WAS NOT PREPARED SUPINELY ACCEPT ISRAELI DEMANDS AND RECALL OF HIS DELEGATION WOULD DRAMATIZE THIS. (I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT ARAB REACTION FORCED HIM TO TAKE THIS STEP, AS EGYPTIAN LEFTISTS BELIEVE (SEPTTEL), BUT RATHER THAT HE THINKS IT WOULD HELP HIM IN INTRA-ARAB MANEUVERING.) (B) HE HOPES SUCH ACTION MAY INFLUENCE ISRAELI LEADERS AND PUBLIC INTO SHOWING MORE FLEXIBILITY, ESPECIALLY SINCE HE HAS ALREADY DANGLED BEFORE THEM DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, OPEN BORDERS
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PAGE 03 CAIRO 02161 01 OF 02 191633Z

AND OTHER ASPECTS OF NATURE OF PEACE; (C) HE HOPES HIS ACTION WILL MAKE IT CLEAR TO US THAT THERE IS A LIMIT TO HOW FAR HE CAN BE EXPECTED TO GO. I SUSPECT PRESIDENT CARTER'S RECENT STATEMENT ALLUDING TO POSSIBILITY SOME ISRAELI SETTLERS REMAINING IN SINAI STILL TROUBLES HIM ABOUT OUR ULTIMATE INTENTIONS AND I KNOW ANNOUNCEMENT THAT WEIZMAN IS GOING TO U.S. SOON TO NEGOTIATE F-16/F-15 SALE ALSO CONCERNS HIM ABOUT OUR POSTURE. WHETHER SADAT'S PERCEPTIONS ARE WELL GROUNDED IN FACT OR NOT IS NOT THE ISSUE. THEY DOUBTLESS PLAY PART IN HIS THINKING.

5. I AM CONVINCED THAT SADAT WANTS TO GO BACK TO THE PEACE PROCESS IF THERE IS ANY REASONABLE HOPE OF OBTAINING A SATISFACTORY SETTLEMENT. HE HAS TOO MUCH PERSONAL PRESTIGE INVESTED IN IT TO DROP IT LIGHTLY AND IS WELL AWARE THAT HIS MILITARY OPTIONS ARE SHARPLY LIMITED. BUT HE WILL NEED SOME CLEAR INDICATION THAT BEGIN IS PREPARED TO OFFER MORE THAN HE HAS THUS FAR ON BOTH THE SINAI AND THE WEST BANK/GAZA ISSUES. HE DOUBTLESS HOPES THAT WE CAN HELP BRING BEGIN AROUND AND WILL BE LOOKING FORWARD TO HEARING THE SECRETARY'S ESTIMATE OF ISRAELI REACTION AND THE PROSPECTS FOR A MORE FLEXIBLE BEGIN POSITION.

6. THERE IS TALK IN THE AIR AGAIN THAT SADAT WILL OFFER HIS RESIGNATION AND SOME SUGGESTION THAT SATURDAY'S EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY SESSION HAS BEEN CALLED FOR THIS PURPOSE. CHIEFS OF MISSION HAVE BEEN ASKED BE PRESENT. IF SADAT CONCLUDES THERE IS NO HOPE OF AN HONORABLE AGREEMENT, HE MAY WELL PROFFER RESIGNATION AND OFFER TURN RESPONSIBILITIES OVER TO MUBARAK. BUT THE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY SESSION IS DOUBTLESS ALSO BEING CALLED

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PAGE 01 CAIRO 02161 02 OF 02 191635Z
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S E C R E T SECTION 02 OF 02 CAIRO 02161
EXDIS

TO DEMONSTRATE PUBLICLY TO THE ISRAELIS, ARABS AND OTHERS THAT SADAT'S STAND ON ME PEACE ISSUES HAS THE SUPPORT OF THE EGYPTIAN PEOPLE THROUGH THEIR DULY ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES AND THAT HE SHOULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO GIVE MORE. EVEN IF HE PRESENTS RESIGNATION, CHANCES ARE IT WILL BE OVERWHELMINGLY REJECTED AND HE WILL HAVE NEW PA MANDATE TO PROCEED AS HE THINKS BEST.

7. FACT REMAINS, HOWEVER, THAT SADAT AND EGYPTIANS ARE ANXIOUSLY AWAITING SECRETARY'S ARRIVAL TOMORROW TO HEAR HIS ASSESSMENT OF PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF ME PEACE EFFORT IN WAKE RECALL OF EGYPTIAN DELEGATION AND TO CONSIDER FUTURE STRATEGY. EILTS

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